

Dems vow to carry on Wellstone's work

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By Chuck Larson

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Top Democrats, including Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, urged party supporters Monday to pay tribute to Minnesota's late Sen. Paul Wellstone by continuing their efforts to win votes for the Nov. 5 election.

"Wellstone would say that it's OK to feel sad and cry," a teary-eyed Sen. Tom Harkin said. "He then would say get off your duffs and get every vote." Describing Wellstone as his closest friend in the Senate, Harkin said he would remember Wellstone by continuing his fight for children and families. He will speak at a memorial service for Wellstone Tuesday in Minnesota.

"We'll remember him by not leaving anyone behind," Harkin said.

Wellstone, one of the most liberal members of Congress, died in a plane crash Oct. 25 in northern Minnesota.

Daschle, D-S.D., said that the balance of power for the U.S. House and Senate rests in Iowa.

"I came here to see what a Democratic tidal wave looks like," he told the 75 cheering supporters, most of whom wore bright-green Wellstone campaign stickers. "Wellstone gives us one advantage: Motivation," he said.

Daschle, who first won election to the U.S. House by 105 votes in 1978, said he understands a tight, hard fought race.

"Wellstone had a lot of fight," Daschle told the packed IMU State Room. "[Democrats are] going to carry that fight for the next eight days."

Daschle said the strength of the Democratic Party lies in its diversity. "We are the party of inclusion," he said. "Not a party of the rich."

He praised Harkin for his work on the Americans with Disabilities Act, the 2002 farm bill, and his support for education. Harkin chairs the Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee and sits on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee.

"Iowa has never sent a stronger, more intelligent leader to the U.S. Senate," he said.

Rep. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., said that Iowa can help Democrats take control of the U.S. House by winning six Republican incumbent seats.

"You have a chance to elect a real Democrat," Schakowsky said as she introduced Julie Thomas, a Cedar Rapids pediatrician running against Rep. Jim Leach, R-Iowa.

"With the passing of Wellstone," Thomas said, "I will step up and fight for those things he believed in Congress."

Students received a recorded telephone call from Harkin Sunday, personally inviting them to the event and saying that their vote could determine the outcome of the election. Recorded telephone messages are a common campaign tactic as both parties are battling to get out their vote.

"For a Democrat in Iowa, you don't need to go to heaven to get your reward," Harkin said. "Just go to Johnson County."

In most polls, Harkin leads his Republican opponent, Rep. Greg Ganske, by nine points